1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
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nawal[75]), which inhabit the hills, caves, deep water pools, etc. They are extremely malevolent and they are ever ready to injure the people, causing disease or death. They are especially dangerous after sundown, when the fear of them makes a coward of the most daring and courageous Indians.

The Indian has a natural reluctance to reveal his religious ideas, especially such as he suspects to seem ridiculous to a stranger. It is therefore very difficult to obtain reliable information from them pertaining to this subject. At the death of a person the material body undergoes dissolution and one or more spirits are set free and roam about doing mischief, until they are directed by the sukya to the Hereafter. Animals likewise have spirits, or they may be possessed by evil spirits.

Conspicuous hills are generally haunted by evil spirits, and the latter are said to have carved the petroglyphs found at certain large river falls. Peculiarly shaped rocks are supposed to have been formerly human beings, who have become petrified, generally as a punishment.[76] Not only may sentient beings be changed into rocks, but they may also originally have issued from them. A Sumu legend traces the origin of that tribe to the Kaunapa Hill on the left bank of Rio Patuca, to a place where petrified navels are said to exist.

Trees and plants appear to be animated by spirits (M.: *kilka;* T., P.: *wapasi;* U.: *wapaka*), which affect their growth and the ripening of their fruits. In order to increase the yield of a fruit tree, or to render barren trees productive, several objects are placed on their branches after having been blown upon (M.: *yabakna*) by the sukya. Vegetal attraction charms, which are carried for good luck in the various walks of life, would seem to point toward an original belief in plants possessing associated spirits.

Indians will keep at a certain distance from spirits and do not look at them nor point to them, nor even talk of them, as they might materialize, for, "speak of the devil and he is sure to appear." They even refuse to look at certain places haunted by evil spirits, and if they have to pass at close distance they will turn away the face in an opposite direction.

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[75] This word has evidently a close philological connection with *Nagualli*, the name of a magical high priest of the Aztecs; he was called to and was supposed to assume animal shape at will. From his name is derived the term "nagualism," a species of sorcery still existing among the ignorant Ladinos in certain regions of Central America. *Nagua* or *nawak* is also the Sumu name for "puma" or "jaguar." Cf. also *naual* "sorcerer" and *naual-ik* "to predict, to enchant," in the Quiché language of Guatemala.

[76] On the right bank of Rio Coco, opposite Yaluk Hill, there are some rocks which are believed to be the petrified remains of a great Sumu sukya, named Panamaka, who lived on the said hill.

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
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The spirits may come to the neighborhood of human habitations in their anthropomorphic form and try to seduce Indians of the opposite sex, and abnormal children will be the result of this intimacy. Monstrosities among the animal and vegetable world are also held to be spirits. Just like snakes, these spirits are said to have a great passion for women at the menstrual periods.

CONNECTION OF SPIRITS WITH THE SILK-COTTON TREE.—The silk-cotton tree (M.: *sisin;* T., P.: *ponya;* U.: *paniki*) is said to be the abode of the spirits of the departed, and no one ventures under it during the night. It must not be cut down, as by such an act the spirits would be robbed of their favorite resting place, and they would not fail to revenge themselves. Should it be absolutely necessary, however, to cut down a silk-cotton tree, the wrath of the spirits may be avoided by burying something at the foot of the tree in the shape of an offering, as food, red peppers, money, etc. When the tree has been felled, the object in question may be recovered. On Rio Lacus, a southern affluent of Rio Coco, a Sumu used for this purpose two small dolls or puppets (M.: *yapti;* S.: *ditalsa*), which he had obtained from the sukya. This procedure, which savors of African origin, is the only case of this sort which I have met among the Sumu, but the habit in question is common enough among the Miskito.

The Indians also claim that a dugout made from the silk-cotton tree will groan continually during the night, and that at the same time it will travel with tremendous speed. A similar plaintive sound is said to be emitted during the dark by mattresses or pillows stuffed with the down adhering to the seeds of the tree. For the above-named reasons the credulous Indians make no use whatever of the haunted tree.

The Creoles and the West Indian Negroes dread this tree even more than do the Indians; according to them the spirit of the deceased, which they call "shadow" or "duppy," leaves the grave on the third day after death in order to roam about the woods, especially around the ceiba or silk-cotton trees. Some believe that these superstitions concerning the tree may have been taken from the Africans; still, the Maya of Yucatan and the Quiché of Guatemala, who have had practically no intercourse with Negroes, hold beliefs regarding the silk-cotton tree similar to those of the Miskito and Sumu.

CREATION OF MAN.—As stated above, the Miskito confound Thunder (*Alaska*) and God (*Wan-Aisa, Dawan*) sometimes with one another, and both of these supernatural beings are looked upon as the creator of man and the world in general. The Sumu, however, consider the Sun-god (*Uhukapni*) as the Almighty God and Creator of everything, and in former days are supposed to have worshiped him.

1: Conzemius M 4, 5 (1921) 1932
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and fish. The girls stay at home and learn the domestic arts, and they accompany the mother when the latter fishes with the hook or goes to the plantation. 868

Old men are very fond of teaching or lecturing (M.: *smalkaya;* T., P.: *sumalsaia;* U.: *sumalsaka*) to the young men whom they generally accuse of being very headstrong; this practice is also current among the old women with regard to the girls. The hearer's ancestors are always represented to him as models of virtue and good conduct. This form of teaching corresponds roughly to that of the sermon in Christian and other churches. 861

DEATH AND MOURNING

AGONY.—The Miskito, as well as the Sumu, formerly used to starve those who were near the point of death, thinking that it was of no use to keep on feeding them. The Sumu are said to have carried the moribund in the bush to let him die there so as not to be compelled to move away, for in former days the settlement was abandoned at the occurrence of such a calamity. Occasionally a dying person was strangled to relieve his sufferings; first, however, his vitality was tested by placing him in an awkward position, and if he remained motionless, he was choked. In general it must be said that the aged and the sick are much neglected, but there are, of course, many cases to be cited to the contrary. 734 763 [883]

DEATH.—Death is supposed to be due, not to natural causes, but to the agency of sorcery or evil spirits. A gun is sometimes fired off at the occurrence of a calamity, in order to clear the house of the demons. The women relations of the deceased immediately try to injure themselves by knocking their heads against the house posts, or they attempt to commit suicide by hanging or drowning. All this is, however, only pretense to a large extent, for they know that they will be prevented by the other persons present from harming themselves; they rarely make any effort to injure themselves when there is no one about. 761 763

The female relations of the deceased cut their hair off; according to Bell (a: 255; b: 90) this is done under the idea that no one should handle it after the dead person. In former days the Ulwa Indians used to cut their hair off also at the death of their wife (Wickham, b: 208), but nowadays the men of both tribes always keep their hair cut short. 765

The name of the deceased person must never be mentioned in the presence of his or her relations, to whom that would constitute a grave offense. The spirit is always an object of dread and it hovers around its former home; it is feared that it might materialize by pronouncing its name. [765]

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
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764 532 picted eight of the above-named masks; most of them have their backs concaved in a cylindrical form, by which we might imagine that they were parts of sepulchral urns. (See also Roberts, pp. 299–300.)

375 CATCHING THE SOUL OF A DECEASED PERSON.—Upon the death of a person the soul (M.: *tasbaia*) or "shadow," as the Creoles say, leaves the body and remains about the house. After the burial it is "caught" by the sukya and taken to the grave; otherwise it will roam about and do all sorts of mischief. This custom has been introduced among the Miskito by the West Indian Negroes; recently it has spread to the Twahka and Panamaka.

This action takes place at night by a very dim light. The task of the sukya appears to be by no means easy. Sometimes he fails to catch the soul on the first night and has to do everything over again on the following day. He throws himself into a state of ecstasy and then dances around the bed of the deceased, over which a white cotton sheet has been spread. Then he sits down in a hammock which has been slung near by and he communicates the messages received from the dead during his supernatural state. The latter might give him the names of the persons who owe him some money or have failed to return a borrowed object. If he owns some young trees, the fruits of which he has not yet tasted, he will order them cut down without any further delay. Toward daybreak, when all the people present are more or less drunk, for intoxicating beverages are served to all the guests, the sukya seizes some insect, generally a firefly or a beetle, which he pretends to be the soul of the deceased. He wraps it up quickly in the bed sheet or incloses it in a bottle and then takes it to the grave.

Some of these sorcerers are said to be able to catch the soul of Indians who have died far away from home. This is, however, a more difficult task, as the soul may keep him waiting for a whole week, until it condescends to be taken to its final resting place. Formerly the soul was supposed to enter animals or other objects belonging to the deceased, and these had to be killed or broken to drive the intruder out.

THE HEREAFTER

Both tribes believe in the immortality of the soul and its translation to a realm of happiness and bliss. Remains of this belief are seen in the burial customs, for certain objects are given to the dead which are indispensable to him during his long journey to that final resting place. Some Indians make the future existence dependent on present conduct, but this idea has undoubtedly been borrowed from Christianity. [177]

1: Conzelmius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
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The land of hereafter of the Miskito is far superior to the vale of tears in which we live; it is well stocked with all their favorite game, fish, and other food, as well as drink. Green turtles are plentiful and may easily be caught, and in the forests are large droves of peccaries and monkeys which may be killed at will. Fruit trees are continually in bearing and, like the other food plants there, do not need to be replanted. There are no other people there but Miskito; the paradise is unattainable to Sumu, Rama, Paya, and other tribes, or to foreigners.

JOURNEY TO THE HEREAFTER (MISKITO).—The following story, dealing with the soul's journey to the underworld or paradise, is well known to the Miskito inhabiting the Nicaraguan coast, but not those living on Rio Coco and in Honduras.

A Miskito, named *Nakûli* or *Nakîli*, had lost his wife whom he loved very much. He went to her grave and there suddenly saw himself in the presence of her disembodied soul (*isiâsi*). The latter was only about 2 feet high, and informed him of her starting now her journey to the *Yapti-misri*.[a] He wished to accompany her, but she told him that such a thing was out of the question, since he was still alive. But he insisted and was not to be persuaded to remain behind, and so they started out together. She led the way and turned into a very narrow trail, which he had never seen before.

They arrived at a place where there were many moths (*sampapa*) flying about. She was afraid of them and did not dare to proceed, but he chased them away and they continued their march.

After a while the trail led between two low pine trees (*dhas*), which were so close together that the wife could barely pass; the husband, being still in his normal size, was unable to squeeze himself through, but merely walked around this obstacle. According to another version the two trees were constantly moving to and fro, annihilating those persons who had behaved badly on earth. Some again claim that the safe passing of this obstacle was merely a matter of dexterity.

They continued their journey and came to a precipice which was spanned by a bridge of the width of a human hair. Below there was a huge pot of boiling water attended by *sikla* birds. The wife being of reduced size and weight was able to walk over this narrow bridge, but *Nakûli* did not find the distance across very great, and so he jumped it.

Then they arrived at a very large river, where there was a canoe paddled by four toads (*sukkik*).[b] This stream swarmed with a small variety of fish, similar to a sardine, and called *blim* (or *bilim*, *bilam*),

[a] Lit.: "Mother-scorpion," a sort of personified hereafter and heretofore.
[b] According to some Indians this canoe was paddled by a dog.

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
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715 713 which the soul took for sharks (*Sūl*). On the opposite side they saw the country of the *Yapti-mūrī*; every one there appeared to be happy. The souls of those persons who had not led a righteous life were upset with the boat and devoured by the sardines. The wife was taken over in the canoe by the toads, while he managed to swim over.

On the other side they were received by the *Yapti-mūrī*, a very tall, stout woman with many breasts, to whom the inhabitants came occasionally to suck like babies. She appeared to be rather angry at *Nahūli* for having come, and ordered him to go back to the earth again. He implored her to let him remain, as he loved his wife so much and did not wish to be separated from her. She agreed finally to let him stay.

In this country no one had to work; there was plenty of excellent food and drink, and there was no lack of amusements. But after staying there for some time, *Nahūli* longed to go back to earth, in order to see his children again. *Yapti-mūrī* allowed him to go on condition that he would never return to the hereafter until after his death. She placed him in a huge bamboo rod which she deposited on the river. After a while he noticed from the high waves that he was on the sea, and finally a gigantic breaker threw him on the shore, just in front of his own hut.

715 JOURNEY TO THE HEREAFTER (SUMU).—After death the soul undertakes its pilgrimage to *Ōbul* or *Ūbul* (lit.: "mottled dwelling"), that is, the paradise, which is situated under the earth toward the east, where the sun rises.

On its journey the soul is attacked by macaws (*sā sus*) and moths (*tapam yula*) which attempt to bite it; it defends itself with the aid of two sticks of wood tied together with cotton thread in the shape of a cross, and which are always joined to the deceased person before burial.

Then the soul is met by a gigantic worm, which devours the women who have not always been faithful to their husbands. Men are not molested by this monster, as they make themselves invulnerable by attaching to the body a coat of cockles (*ulawak*).

The road then leads along the abode of a small black lizard living on trees, and called *kusā*, which tries to catch the soul and deliver it to a toad (*wulu*); the latter has a large pot with boiling water on the fire, and throws all the bad people therein. But the soul may easily escape from final destruction by offering some beads to the *kusā*, who is very fond of such ornaments, and by giving likewise some small present to the toad.

The next stage is a high, slippery hill, called *Uy Asā*, which has to be climbed. The relatives of the deceased smear the soles of his feet with beeswax (*bulsa*) in order to facilitate his ascending the hill.

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
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This obstacle overcome, the soul finally makes its entry into *Obul*, the land of plenty.*

THE FESTIVAL OF THE DEAD

The festival of the dead (M.: *sikro, siâkro;* S.: *sâ*) is the most important of the bacchanalian orgies of these two tribes. Its real significance appears to be unknown to the large majority of the present-day Indians; it is certain, however, that it has some connection with the journey of the souls of the deceased to the hereafter.

THE SIKRO OF THE MISKITO.—To most Miskito the *sikro* of to-day is only an occasion for merrymaking and getting drunk. Originally only one *sikro* was made for each deceased person, but nowadays the Indians repeat this feast several times in order to have an excuse for a drinking bout. The custom can still be observed among the "heathen" Miskito of the upper Rio Coco and of Honduras. In the remaining districts of the Mosquito Coast nearly all the Indians belonging to this tribe have been converted to Christianity.

The *sikro* takes place about a year after a death, or rather as soon as the field of sweet cassava, planted especially for this purpose, has come into maturity. Although the Miskito make a great variety of intoxicating drinks (*saiaka*), the one consumed on such an occasion is invariably prepared from cassava. The fermented root of this plant is generally kept in casks obtained from the foreign merchants, but in former days the drink was left to ferment in large homemade earthenware vessels (*sumi*). The expenses of the feast are borne by the relatives of the deceased, who will butcher one or two head of cattle for this purpose, but all the neighbors lend a hand at the preparation of food and drink, and they even help at the planting and reaping of the cassava.

All the men and many of the women from the neighboring settlements are expected to come, and they begin to arrive, dressed in their best attire, about sundown on the specified day. The festival lasts until all the food and drink has been consumed, that is, two or three days. The women keep apart by themselves, and do not mingle with the men, except in order to pass the calabashes of drink around from one of the guests to the other. Occasionally both sexes

* The Sumu never kill any of the various creatures which they will have to meet on their final journey. When they deprive a toad of its skin for the making of a drumhead, they do not kill this amphibian, but release it again afterwards, and give it a few berries from a certain tree as a payment for its skin. The parents also admonish their children not to ill-treat animals, especially such as may be useful to them on the voyage to the hereafter. Similar conceptions are met with among primitive Indian tribes in various parts of the Americas who have had little or no intercourse with Christians.

2: Kirchhoff E-4 (no date) 1948
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same way that manioc is planted. Some of the tribes recount a myth of a great flood. The *Jicaque* believe in two benevolent deities and a female god of evil. No offerings are made to the "good" deities, but attempts are made to placate the "evil" one, a female who is responsible for all misfortune and who causes death.

The *Sumo* and *Mosquito* and possibly the *Paya* believe that after death the soul makes its way eastward over a difficult route to a nether world of plenty and happiness. The description of the route traveled and the acts performed by the survivors of the deceased to aid the progress of his soul on this road differ from tribe to tribe. Under certain conditions the soul may remain about the house of the deceased and even occupy his former belongings, including domestic animals. For this reason these things must be destroyed.

The *Sumo*, *Mosquito*, and *Paya* believe that the world is populated with innumerable spirits. These haunt hills, caves, deep pools of water, and other places, and they are responsible for most misfortunes including sickness and death. A large part of the work of shamans is to placate these spirits, to drive them out of sick people, and otherwise to destroy them. Protection from the bad spirits is afforded by amulets and charms.

SHAMANISM

Most *Sumo* and *Mosquito* settlements have a shaman, who may take part in secular affairs but whose chief duty is to cure the sick. Shamans possess some spiritual power, but very little is known of the various rituals through which it is acquired. Sons and sometimes sons-in-law may succeed a shaman. Curing varies in detail according to the individual shaman and the spirits addressed. A shaman goes into a trance in which he contacts the spirits and, in one way or another, drives them out of the afflicted person. Curing rituals also include songs, dances, and the use of painted sticks, carved figures, and other paraphernalia. Some diseases are cured by the imposition of diets, the prohibition of sexual intercourse, and other restrictions. Complicated diseases or village-wide epidemics are isolated and receive special medical and ceremonial treatment. Infections, snake bites, and diseases such as malaria are cured by both shamans and laymen, the latter using infusions of herbs and a large number of native medicines. Steam baths followed by a cold plunge are also employed. Baths in hot springs and partial burial in hot sand are common practices, especially among the *Sumo*. When surgery is necessary a shaman employs knives made of obsidian, flint, bone, and such. Ashes, tobacco, wax, and resin are used as antiseptics.

A shaman may also prophesy the future or determine the route hunters should take in order to find game. By conjuring, a shaman may cause harm to come to people. A shaman may be retained by a person to eliminate an enemy.